

◆ HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER ◆

57 Hartford Street San Francisco, California 94114 Telephone: 415/863-2507

July/August/September 1988

In the city
What a heavy smell of things!
The summer moon.

Nozawa Boncho

Clear full moon,
The night is very still.
My heart sounds
Like a bell.

Anonymous folksong

The cool of morning –
Separating from the bell,
The sound of the bell.

Buson

In this issue we have selected articles that represent the deepening connection of the Hartford Street Zen Center and MAITRI Hospice with the larger Buddhist community. This kind of interchange is allowing us all to broaden our understanding of Buddhist teachings and Sangha life and to explore the larger issues of presenting Buddhist practice. In this light we would like to express our appreciation to Richard Baker-roshi, head of the Western Zen Center in Santa Fe; Ösel Tendzin, Vajra Regent of Dharmadhatu; Kobun Chino, teacher at Jikoji in Los Altos and Hokoji in Taos; Robert Aitken-roshi, head of Diamond Sangha in Honolulu; Kakuzen Keido Les Kaye, head of Kannon Do in Mountain View; John Tarrant, a senior student of Aitken-roshi currently teaching in Santa Rosa; and Helen Glassman, from the Zen community in New York.

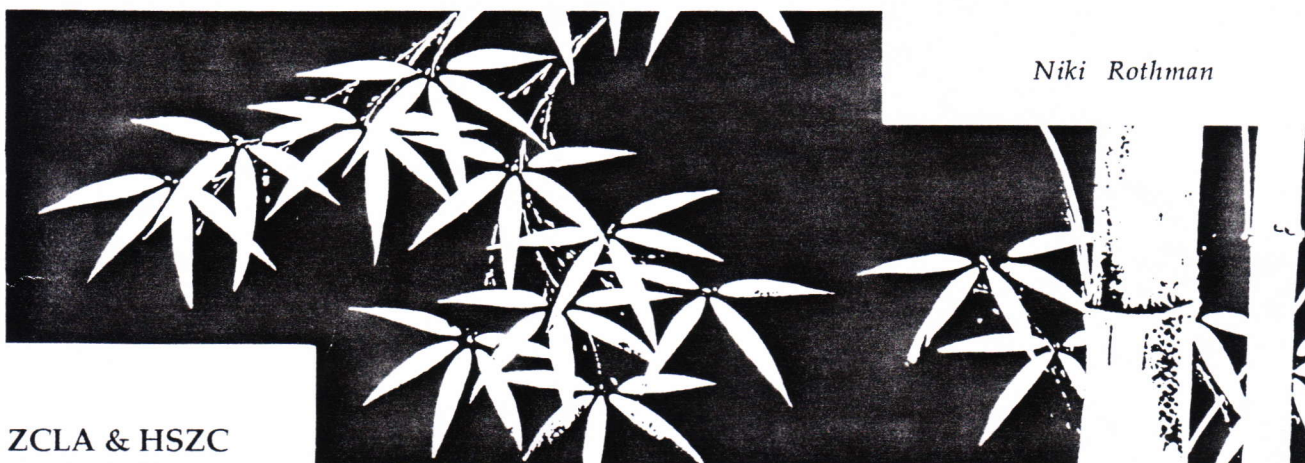


Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin Visits

Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin, Dharma heir of Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, and current head of Dharmadhatu, made his first visit to Hartford Street Zen Center this May. HSZC was formerly the site for the first Dharmadhatu meditation and teaching center in San Francisco. The portrait of the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, at our main altar in the zendo is a reminder of this connection. Issan has said he can feel Trungpa Rinpoche's energy in the house.

Over tea and cookies, the Vajra Regent warmly shared with us his reminiscences of life with Chögyam Trungpa. The late afternoon sunlight gave the room a golden quality. It felt like a family reunion, sharing common history. Buddhism in America has an oral history. So much has happened in our lifetime in the transmission of Buddhism to the West that we have personal and collective history, memories, and intimacy in having experienced teachers, practice, and community together.

We appreciate the Vajra Regent taking time out of his busy schedule of visiting the Bay Area Dharmadhatu centers to honor us with his visit.



Niki Rothman

ZCLA & HSZC

I first encountered Maezumi-roshi, Abbot of Zen Center of Los Angeles, in Peter Matthiessen's book, Nine-Headed Dragon River, just before moving to California last April. The book prompted a visit to ZCLA's Mountain Center for a sesshin last August. Maezumi-roshi became my teacher during that sesshin, and I've been more or less commuting since then. Maezumi-roshi, whose principal teachers were Yasutani-roshi and Koryu-roshi, is in the unusual position of having Dharma transmission in both the Soto and Rinzai lineages, which he brings together in his own teaching.

In visiting ZCLA, one immediately feels a depth of experience in the resident monks, and a patient excitement in discovering the American Dharma. Roshi's plans include building a training monastery at Mountain Center for perhaps 150 persons.

A particular interest of mine is to encourage frequent interchange between Hartford Street Zen Center and Zen Center of Los Angeles, since I believe that their members have much to offer each other. Issan has already been South: in March he attended the Shuso Hosen (ordination ceremony) of Kenzon, a senior student at ZCLA, and a friend of his for twenty years. More recently, two Japanese monks from Los Angeles - Sogen and Geiko - visited Hartford Street. And more ZCLA monks are on the way. Koren, a native of Arizona and Maezumi-roshi's assistant, and Tenshin, a senior monk originally from England, will visit the week of June 19th.

Please talk with me if you would like to find out more about Zen Center of Los Angeles, and what's going on there.

James Thornton

Patriarch & Tiger
Anonymous
13th Century, China



Jukai Initiation

Angelique Farrow, a resident and HSZC's treasurer, received lay ordination in the zendo on Saturday, May 14th, 1988, in a traditional Jukai ceremony performed by Richard Baker-roshi, with whom she has studied for several years.

As the ceremony began Baker-roshi noted that he has known Angelique since she was very young, had seen her grow and her practice deepen; that in seminars he had seen her yield to her true nature. Appropriately, her new Buddhist name is Sho-Yo Jo-E - "light-willow." The Buddha ancestors were invoked and given homage. There was avowal of "ancient, twisted karma", ritual purification, taking refuge, recitations of the precepts, and Angelique was welcomed with the words, "Now you are Buddha's child." The rakusu - a symbolic robe hand-sewn by the initiate - and the lineage papers were first held in the billowing incense before being passed across the altar. We chanted: "All Buddhas, ten directions, three times - all beings, Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas - wisdom beyond wisdom, Maha Prajna Paramita." We bowed.

When Baker-roshi said: "We all take these vows and precepts with you", I felt myself included more personally in this ceremony than I had expected. As he recited the precepts, I tried each one on silently, testing it against my own life as it is today. I felt grateful for Baker-roshi's generosity and my own intention.

Later, I asked Angelique about the ceremony. She said, "It was different than I thought it would be - the ceremony had a power of its own. Before the ceremony I was in a state of terror - I really wanted to escape. I wanted to smoke a martini and drink a cigarette and to physically get away. I was worried and depressed about everything but when I entered the ceremony the anxiety dropped. It was effortless. I followed Issan in the procession from room to room offering incense. I answered 'yes' to the precepts as they were given to me. It was like falling asleep when I'm tired."

To be a Buddhist is to deeply acknowledge the truth of the Buddha's teachings of suffering, impermanence and interdependence; and to follow Buddha's path is to take refuge in the Buddha (our teachers, and our capacity for awakening), the Dharma (the teachings) and the Sangha (our community). We can make Buddha's way our own through meditation and practicing mindfulness and the compassion that arises from it in our daily life activities. Traditionally, Buddhists vow to observe precepts as ethical guides and as support in following Buddha's path in our lives. Angelique took these vows, which consist of the Three Pure Precepts and the Ten Grave Precepts. The Three Pure Precepts are: 1) refraining from actions that create attachment; 2) making every effort to live in realization, or mindfulness; and, 3) living to benefit all beings. The Ten Grave Precepts are: 1) not to kill; 2) not to steal; 3) not to hurt anyone through sexuality; 4) not to lie; 5) not to abuse intoxicants; 6) not to speak badly of others; 7) not to praise self at the expense of others; 8) not to be possessive of anything; 9) not to harbor ill will; and, 10) not to abuse the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Niki Rothman

Kobun: Words and Stuff

You gotta listen to get it, don't you? When the visiting roshi (a handsome Japanese man with salt-and-pepper hair and an age that's hard to guess) comes to talk at Hartford Street for April Maitri, the crowd's a big one. It's nearly overflowing, quite expectant, a little on edge.

First he fields a question from Eduardo. "In the Heart Sutra," Eduardo asks, "what's negation?" He amplifies. "If the sutra says there's suffering how come it keeps insisting there's not suffering too?" It's the negation that bothers him.

In reply Kobun refers to a certain relationship between architecture and zazen. Negation, states the roshi, is the empty space Indian Buddhists found in stupas when they wanted to house Buddha's body, the Dharmakaya. "The stupas" - he adds - "caught falling sun rays at the top, and that's what we do in meditation when we catch the flux of nothing in positions we take. This empty space at the top is the same as people doing zazen." That's his answer to Eduardo's question.

Next comes a "chocolate cookies mondo." Kobun notices a plate of chocolate cookies on the floor beside him. He leans over and takes one. "Mmmm good!" he says, smacking his lips. That's an answer for Mark who's just asked some question, but what, I don't remember. But to myself I think - can words be used as gestures then, just like gestures sometimes can be words? That's when the roshi picks up his cookie saying, "When you're speaking, you're lying, aren't you, and when you pick something up, aren't you stealing?" Which is when I decide I like this roshi.

There are more questions but I'm fading, since the day's been just too long and I want bed. Then there's an occurrence that's so much a part of the evening I decide I have to stay on and make (non-?) sense of it. James, the James who used to live at HSZC, comes in and causes quite a stir. I can't quite get the point of his protests and demands - though I can tell in some way they have something to do with Issan. James wants something from Issan - what? The commotion settles down, however, when the roshi with a discernible note of impatience in his voice tells James to go wash his face. "You're speedy", he announces. Or did he say "speeding" maybe? Who knows. After the talk when I ask several different people, no one agrees, they all have their different versions.

So now it's time for roshi to leave, and he does. A long evening. Exhausted, I go bum a cigarette off Issan, asking him for his "take" on this, what did Issan think of the evening? First Issan points at a bunch of different stuff lying around the second floor hall. There's things of David Bullock's, what looks like a sleeping bag, stuff belonging to Philip-sensei, whatever. Then he includes James on this list, gesturing with his arm to make a list of items that takes in people, things, absent, present, not distinguishing among them. "Now he's seen Hartford Street", says Issan about the roshi who's just left, this Kobun. And I have to laugh too, catching myself feeling and thinking like you do looking at a video in an arcade someplace and seeing Pac Man eating his way across a line of obstacles, gobbling them all down and not getting any fatter. Sort of like people at zazen or those Indian Buddhists Kobun mentioned, I decide, stuffing a bunch of nothing in them - though I'm somewhat deranged: too many chocolate cookies? But Mr. Pac Man's on his merry way, continuing to gobble cookies, eating up nothing!

Bruce Boone

Hartford Street member Bruce Boone gives his impressions of the recent visit of Kobun Chino Otogawa, teacher at Jikoji in Santa Cruz County and Hokoji in Taos, New Mexico.

Sitting With J.D.

Stairs creak as I walk up to the second floor at the Hartford Street Zen Center. No other staircase makes sounds like these, a cry of recognition from the house as I step up to J.D.'s room.

Walking in, I always see his eyes first, then his face. J.D. is propped up in bed, I'm crossing the threshold of his room; we connect. First this eye-to-eye greeting and a smile. Then I notice the rest of the room: whether J. D.'s sheets are white that day or colored, flowers on the nightstand, whether the shades are up and the windows open. Yes, a candle is burning on the altar.

It's Sunday morning again, ten o'clock a.m. again, and that's when I sit with J.D. Four hours every Sunday. Every Sunday it's different. When we first met back in February, J.D.'s health was ebbing, his speech limited to short requests for "water." "Please turn me." "Ice cream." But in March and throughout April and May, his health rebounded, his appetite returned, his energy increased, and talking became easier.

I never know what each Sunday with J.D. will bring. Once I'm over the threshold to his room, it's always new. Sometimes we talk about his specific AIDS related illnesses - whether his lungs are clear or what changes of mood occurred during the week. One exuberant day we spent the entire four hours talking about peak experiences in our lives. Usually there are long periods of quiet, sitting together, sometimes napping, or relaxing with each other. With the resurgence of his health, there have been trips - being driven through Golden Gate Park by his friend Phil; breakfast at the Port Deli with his lover Pierre; J.D.'s journey downstairs to attend a Zen Center Sunday lecture.

Over the months, J.D. has trained many people to sit with him. His willingness to ask for what he wants is a great resource. Part of my training has been to learn to expect newness from him. The stairs at Hartford Street Zen Center may have a familiar creak, but then there's the sight of J.D.'s eyes and smile - and the adventure continues.

George Stevens

The Hartford Street Zen Center has initiated a hospice program, and the first resident, J.D., has been living in the household since November, 1987. He is cared for around the clock by members of the Hartford Street community, volunteers from the San Francisco Zen Center's hospice training program, and nursing attendants. This article was written by one of J.D.'s caregivers.

Buddha is your mind
And the Way goes nowhere.
Don't look for anything but this.
If you point your cart north
When you want to go south,
How will you arrive?

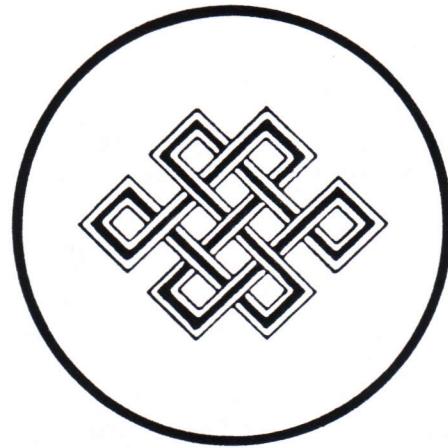
Ryokan

Sonnet to Bless a Marriage

It's Sunday and bells toll
or if not, the birds. When blue
enters a poem all sound flees
fear. Fear, a deeper sliver than time.

Where will it go your tentative eyes
implore. We were born old.
Little fish in the sky of dreams
spawn children, houses, love.

Touch each other gently, say "I do."
Nothing else matters. No matter
how long we live we'll never be
through. This is the vow anointed
in all choices.
Even the dreams of mutes are full of voices.
Steve Abbott



Wedding of Gregory Wood and Claire Young Sunday, May 15, 1988.

The house was filled with bouquets of flowers from Green Gulch and Ixia. For the wedding guests, we rearranged the tatami mats in the zendo to make it look like somebody had thought about it. We prepared tea.

The wedding was in the afternoon. Baker-roshi said, "On this beautiful day in San Francisco, we will all together marry Claire and Gregory. They have decided to get married and we have decided to help them. Our lives are woven of vows of compassion and love. Buddhist compassion is to be able to put yourself in another's place. Where better for this than marriage?"

"Give up the small self and take refuge in each other", said Baker-roshi. They took the three-fold refuge: in the Buddha as the perfect teacher, in the Dharma as the perfect teaching, and in the Sangha as the perfect life. They received the Three Purifying Precepts, vowing to refrain from self-clinging, to live with realization as our goal, and to live for the benefit of all beings; and the Ten Prohibitory Precepts. "A disciple of the Buddha does not own anything, including the truth", Baker-roshi commented, "Will you jeopardize your private truth to be two beings living as one?"

Each took a candle from the small wedding altar and lit them together from the main altar candle. They then lit the wedding altar candle together. Baker-roshi said, "Keep this candle, and whenever you have an argument, light the candle - and I hope the candle lasts a long time."

The couple exchanged malas (Buddhist rosaries), and gold rings stamped with the knot of eternity.

The ceremony continued with, "We have given you precepts and refuges so you may be married unconditionally. Love, protect, and take care of each other. Protect each other's solitude and individuality. You have been brought together by parents and friends. Please enjoy your life together. We have offered incense, candle light, flowers and the great void that you may be married to each other and realize your innermost intentions."

Claire and Gregory thanked their parents, Baker-roshi, Mrs. Suzuki, Issan, and friends for support. Gregory said he was grateful for his son Ethen's closeness. As an acknowledgment to them, Issan said, "Thank you for honoring this zendo by allowing us to help you with this wedding."

Niki Rothman

Schedule

Tuesday	August 2	Maitri Evening: zazen 6:00 pm, dinner 7:00 pm Speaker: Angie Boissevain, 7:45 pm Half Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 1:00 pm
Sunday	August 7	Lecture, 10:00 am
Sunday	August 14	Lecture, 10:00 am
Sunday	August 21	Full Moon Bodhisattva Ceremony, 6:40 pm
Friday	August 26	Lecture, 10:00 am
Sunday	August 28	HSZC Board of Directors Meeting, 6:00 pm Half Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 1:00 pm Lecture, 10:00 am
Sunday	September 4	Maitri Evening: zazen 6:00 pm, dinner 7:00 pm Speaker: to be announced Lecture, 10:00 am
Tuesday	September 6	Lecture, 10:00 am
Sunday	September 11	Lecture, 10:00 am
Sunday	September 18	Lecture, 10:00 am
Sunday	September 25	HSZC Board of Directors Meeting, 6:00 pm Full Moon Bodhisattva Ceremony, 6:40 pm
Monday	September 26	Half Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 1:00 pm
Sunday	October 2	Lecture, 10:00 am

The Hartford Street Zen Center will observe a one month interim period in July. We will, of course, continue our hospice work and all AIDS related activities. The zendo will be open at the regular scheduled times for informal periods of zazen.

Classes

The class on Dogen's writings, Moon In A Dewdrop, will resume on Tuesday, August 9th. We are considering doing a koan study class, using the Shoyuroku as the text, beginning in September.

Maitri Evening Speakers

August 2 – Angie Boissevain, a student of Kobun Chino and a teacher at Jikoji.
September 6 – to be announced

Maitri Evenings occur on the first Tuesday of the month. The evening begins with zazen at 6:00 pm, followed by dinner at 7:00, and the speaker at 7:45. A donation is requested.

Thanks and Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Sunday lecturers Darlene Cohen, Tensho David Schneider, Pat Phelan, Kakuzen Keido Les Kaye, Zenshin Philip Whalen, and Richard Baker-roshi.

Thank you to Maitri Evening speakers Kazuaki Tanahashi, Shunpo Blanche Hartman, and John Tarrant.

Also our gratitude to guest lecturer Kobun Chino.

Comings and Goings

Longtime member Lucien Childs has moved back in to HSZC. David Sunseri has gone to Tassajara.

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Daily Schedule

Monday through Friday:

Zazen	5:00 am
Kinhin	5:40 am
Zazen	5:50 am
Service	6:30 am

Zazen	6:00 pm
Service	6:40 pm

On Sundays there is an informal period of zazen at 9:00 am and a lecture at 10:00 am, followed by tea and discussion. The morning ends with Soji (temple cleaning) in the zendo.

There is zazen instruction and orientation on Mondays at 5:30 pm. If you can't attend at this time, please call us.

